

AUSTRALIA DAY**ST PETER'S ANGLICAN CHURCH BUNDOORA****Monday 26th January 2026****Fr. Stephen Monsiegnur****Readings:** Jeremiah 29:4-14 / Ps 33:12-21 / 1 Thessalonians 5:12-24 / John 8:31-36**Theme:** *In Truth There is a Future***Jeremiah 29:4-14**

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let the prophets and the diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream, for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, says the Lord.

For thus says the Lord: Only when Babylon's seventy years are completed will I visit you, and I will fulfil to you my promise and bring you back to this place. For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then, when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me, says the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

Ps 33:12-21

Happy is the nation whose God is the Lord,
the people whom he has chosen as his heritage.
The Lord looks down from heaven;
He sees all humankind.
From where he sits enthroned he watches
all the inhabitants of the earth—
he who fashions the hearts of them all,
and observes all their deeds.
A king is not saved by his great army;
a warrior is not delivered by his great strength.
The war horse is a vain hope for victory,
and by its great might it cannot save.
Truly the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him,
on those who hope in his steadfast love,
to deliver their soul from death,
and to keep them alive in famine.
Our soul waits for the Lord;
He is our help and shield.
Our heart is glad in him,
because we trust in his holy name.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-24

We appeal to you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labour among you, and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you; esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, beloved, to admonish the idlers, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them. See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil.

May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

John 8:31-36

Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, ‘If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.’ They answered him, ‘We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, “You will be made free”?’

Jesus answered them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.’

SERMON

John 8:31–36 offers a vision of freedom grounded not in national identity or historical triumph but in the liberating truth of Christ. When heard in the context of Australia Day, these words invite a courageous and hope-filled re-imagining of our shared story. Australia Day carries profoundly different meanings across the continent. For many white Australians, it has symbolised beginnings, prosperity, and the shaping of a modern nation. For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, it marks the beginning of dispossession, cultural disruption, and the long struggle for justice and recognition. These narratives coexist, yet they do not sit comfortably together.

The gospel’s insistence on truth challenges any temptation to smooth over these tensions. Jesus speaks of a truth that sets people free—a truth that does not avoid pain but transforms it. In the Australian context, this means acknowledging the reality of invasion, the ongoing consequences of colonisation, and the deep resilience of the world’s oldest living cultures. Such truth-telling is not an act of blame but an act of liberation. It frees non-Indigenous Australians from defensiveness and the fear that honest history diminishes national identity. It affirms for First Nations peoples that their stories, dignity, and sovereignty matter and are seen.

For Indigenous Christians, this passage can resonate as a reminder that their identity and freedom are grounded in God’s enduring presence on this land long before 1788. For the wider nation, it offers a pathway toward a future shaped not by denial but by shared commitment to justice, healing, and relationship.

Seen through this gospel lens, Australia Day becomes less a celebration of what has been and more an invitation to what could be—a future where truth leads to freedom, and freedom opens the way to genuine reconciliation.

Let us pray

God of truth and healing, lead all people on this land toward justice, deepen our compassion, and unite us in the freedom Christ offers all people.